



# REPORT

## THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO TO THE PARK AND RECREATION BOARD

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DATE ISSUED: October 8, 2009

REPORT NO: 104

ATTENTION: Park and Recreation Board  
Agenda of October 15, 2009

SUBJECT: A Request for the Naming of "Craig Noel Circle" in Balboa Park

### SUMMARY

Issue – Should the Park and Recreation Board recommend approval of the naming of "Craig Noel Circle" in the Plaza de Panama area of Balboa Park?

Director's Recommendation – In accordance with Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1001, the Director does not have a recommendation for the naming of "Craig Noel Circle."

Other Recommendations – On October 1, 2009 the Balboa Park Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the naming of "Craig Noel Circle."

Fiscal Impact – None. Naming of "Craig Noel Circle" will have no associated costs.

Environmental - This activity is categorically exempt under CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301, Existing Facilities.

### BACKGROUND

The Plaza de Panama is located in the West Prado area of Balboa Park. Once an open plaza, the space is now occupied primarily by vehicles. A raised circular median is located at the center of the plaza, and contains a quatrefoil designed fountain and landscaping. A smaller planter island with a triangular shape is located to the west of the circle. The circle serves as a hub for vehicular circulation in the Plaza de Panama.

Ms. Deborah Szekely and the Balboa Park Trust of the San Diego Foundation propose to name the traffic circle in the center of the Plaza de Panama the "Craig Noel Circle" and place a temporary commemorative plaque to honor the achievements of Mr. Craig Noel. The plaque will be temporary until such time the Plaza de Panama is reconstructed in accordance with the Central Mesa Precise Plan. The Balboa Park Committee unanimously recommended approval of the proposed temporary commemorative plaque at their October 1, 2009 meeting. The biography of Mr. Noel is attached for your consideration.

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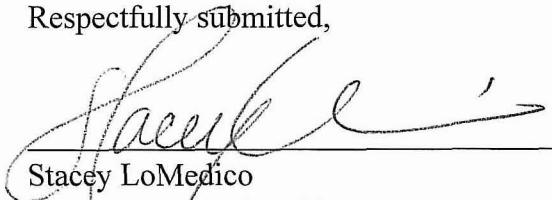
DISCUSSION

Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1001 addresses the naming of parks and recreation facilities. The policy outlines the process for approval and suggests that naming of facilities within parks is preferable to the naming of entire parks. A copy of this policy is attached.

ALTERNATIVES

In accordance with Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1001, the Department does not have an alternative recommendation for the naming of "Craig Noel Circle."

Respectfully submitted,

  
Stacey LoMedico  
Park and Recreation Director

  
Prepared by: Charles Daniels  
Park Designer, Administrative Services

SL/cd

Attachment: Park and Recreation Board Policy No. 1001  
Craig Noel Biography  
Partial Plan of the Plaza de Panama

cc: Council District 3 Office

PARK AND RECREATION BOARD POLICY

- SUBJECT:** Naming of Parks and Recreation Facilities
- BACKGROUND:** The public sometimes suggests that parks and recreation facilities be named after persons, living or dead.
- PURPOSE:** To provide a systematic procedure for the naming of parks and recreation facilities which will assist in their location by the citizenry, and to develop a method for the retention of names of historical or fiscal significance.
- POLICY:** As a general policy, parks and recreation facilities should be named to identify their locations. Especially for parks, the name of the community area, the names of nearby geographic features, the names of adjacent schools and street names should be given first consideration. However, they may also be named for individuals, living or dead, who are of historical significance to the local area or who have made major financial contributions in the opinion of the appropriate Recreation Councils and/or other advisory bodies, Board committees and the full Board. Facilities within parks, (such as buildings, gyms, courts, etc.) are more appropriate for naming after individuals than are parks.
- Renaming a facility for a person, when that facility is already named for a person, should only be undertaken with the utmost consideration. Every attempt should be made to contact the person or heirs of the person for whom the facility is currently named, to present their views verbally, or in writing, at a public hearing.
- PROCEDURE:** The Recreation Council effected by the proposed name change, shall hold a public hearing to review the request and the supporting documents and information, and shall make recommendations to the Area Committees and the Park and Recreation Board on any and all recommended changes to the renaming of existing facilities.
- SUBSTANTIATION:** Park and Recreation Board Minutes of 6/16/83 (page 2469)  
Park and Recreation Board Minutes of November 15, 2001 (page 4).

## CRAIG NOEL BIOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Craig Noel was born in New Mexico in 1915 and came to San Diego as a child. He is a graduate of San Diego High School and San Diego State University. He is now 94 years old.

In 1935, at age 19, Craig worked as a hat checker at the California Pacific International Exposition in Balboa Park. The Old Globe was an attraction at that Exposition, presenting 50-minute versions of Shakespeare's plays, and apparently Craig slipped away to watch them from time to time.

In 1937, the Old Globe reorganized as a community theatre, and Craig was hired as an actor for the Theatre's initial production. He became the Theatre's general director in 1939, and, except for a brief stint in Hollywood and in military service during World War II\*, he has been with the Old Globe ever since – a career spanning about 70 years as the Theatre's inspirational leader. Craig has also played a major role in placing San Diego on national and world maps of cultural achievement. This was recognized by the President of the United States, when he presented Craig with the National Medal of Arts, at a ceremony in the East Room of the White House, in 2007.

During his career at the Old Globe, Craig:

- Directed about 235 productions and oversaw hundreds more;
- Guided the Old Globe through its evolution from an amateur community theatre to a world-class professional theatre;
- Established the world-renowned Shakespeare Festival at the Old Globe in 1949, spearheading a revival of American interest in Shakespeare;
- Oversaw the expansion of the Globe from a temporary facility in Balboa Park to a three-theater complex after disastrous fires in 1978 and 1984; and
- Fostered the careers of many directors and actors, including three-time Tony Award-winner Jack O'Brien, and actors Marion Ross, David Ogden Stiers, Kelsey Grammer and Jonathan McMurtry.

The request to honor Craig in the Plaza de Panama, however, is not made because of Craig's contributions to the Old Globe alone. Craig has been known throughout his career for his unselfish support for education, for the arts and for cultural organizations throughout our community. Among his achievements in these areas, Craig:

- Founded the Junior Theatre in Balboa Park, the oldest continuing children's theatre program in the country, in 1948;
- Worked with the Museum of Contemporary Arts to introduce new works to San Diegans by playwrights like Beckett, Ionesco, Anouilh, Pirandello, Brecht, Behan, Giraudoux and Albee, in the 1960s;
- Promoted the creation and performance of Latino-themed plays in San Diego schools through his Teatro Meta program in 1983. This bilingual playwriting program now serves thousands of San Diego school students;
- In association with Sister Sally Furay and others, founded the Master of Fine Arts in Acting program at the University of San Diego in 1987; and
- Founded the statewide California Theatre Council.

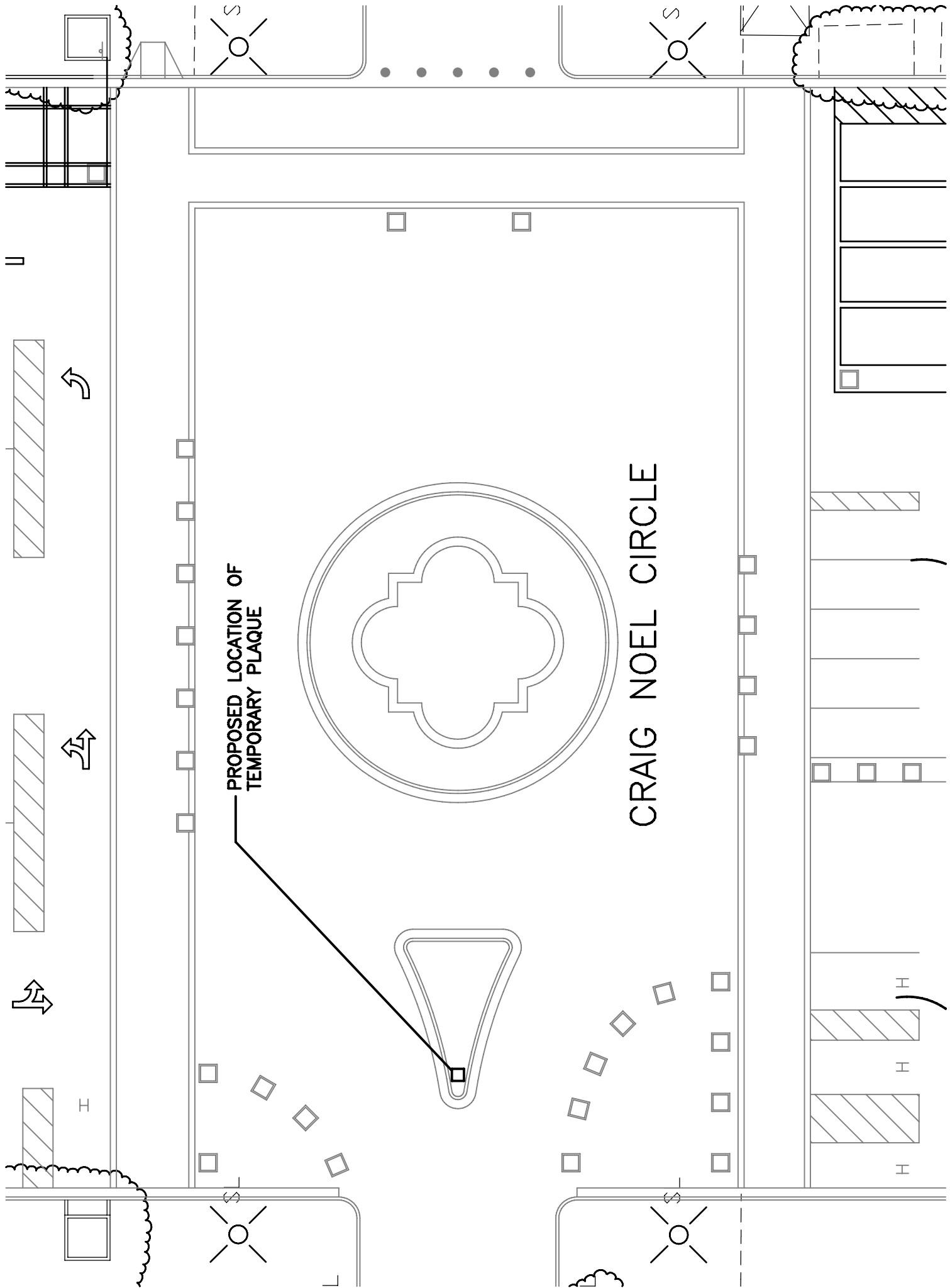
Craig has been honored by many local, state and national leaders. Those honors include:

- City of San Diego's Living Treasure Award;
- California Governor's Award for the Arts;
- University of San Diego's Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters;
- San Diego State University's Outstanding Alumnus Award;
- San Diego Union-Tribune's listing as one of 25 persons who shaped the City's history;
- National Medal of Arts award from the President of the United States.

Craig, now 94 years old, has not yet been recognized in his home for 70 years, Balboa Park, outside of the Old Globe leasehold. Those of us in the community making this proposal believe that Craig's contributions to education, the arts and culture in San Diego extend far beyond the Old Globe leasehold. We respectfully request the naming of this traffic circle in his honor. We hope a ceremony for this purpose can be arranged while he is still well, despite his frailty.

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\* During his stint in Hollywood, Craig worked as a casting director and talent scout for Fox Studios (20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox), where he directed the screen test for an aspiring young actress named Marilyn Monroe. She remained his friend throughout her life. In the Army in World War II, Craig served in the Philippines and in Japan, where he was assigned to General Douglas MacArthur's staff and directed the opening production at the Ernie Pyle Theatre.



PROPOSED LOCATION OF  
TEMPORARY PLAQUE

CRAIG NOEL CIRCLE